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Youth Rebellion, Institutionalism, Job Obsolescence,
Biculturalism, Among Main YMCA Concerns

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Maurice F. Strong, President, National Council of YMCAs of Canada, said tonight that, with young people gaining an increasingly powerful voice in politics, the rebellion of large sections of the youth population against what they regard as society's established institutions cannot and should not be ignored.

"Young people today are questioning the values and standards on which our society is based. They insist on testing these against their own reason and their own experience. They are not willing to accept the pat answers, the comfortable clichés and the smug dogmas of yesterday."

Mr. Strong, the opening speaker at a seminar to re-evaluate Montreal YMCA policies and programs, reviewed many of the problems created by rapidly changing socio-economic conditions.

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The review was far-ranging, touching on such contemporary topics as urbanization, increasing institutionalism, occupational obsolescence, the increasing role of young people in society, biculturalism and the role of government.

"The directions we take will have a significant influence... on the future of the total YMCA movement," he told delegates to the seminar. "Our decisions here will determine whether the Y will be in the forefront of today's changes or a reluctant rear guard."

He urged delegates to recognize that, in the minds of many young people, the YMCA is considered a conformist association, instead of an instrument to eliminate social inequities and deficiencies.

"We must expose ourselves to these criticisms and ask ourselves searchingly and objectively the extent to which they may have some validity."

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Pointing to estimates that, within the next two decades, 80% of the North American population will be compressed into a relatively small number of great metropolitan complexes, he said this will create new social, organization and institutional problems.

"More and more our lives are being lived within, and affected by, larger and more complex institutions. We are educated by big institutions, we work in the big institutions of business life or government bureaucracy: many of our needs are provided by big institutions and much of our recreational and leisure time activities are carried on within an institutional environment," he stated.

"One of the greatest challenges of our times," he declared, "is to create a dynamic and flexible institutionalism which enables individuals to develop and express the best in themselves, rather than the cumbersome and stereotyped bureaucracy which smothers."

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On the subject of occupational obsolescence, he emphasized that, as skills learned during an individual's youth may not be sufficient to enable him to earn a livelihood throughout his lifetime, education must be a continuing process. Helping prepare people to adjust to this fact should be an important Y objective.

Mr. Strong also thinks the current confrontation of Canada's two main solitudes, which he considers the "greatest challenge ever to Canadian nationhood," as another opportunity for Y service.

"We must," he urged, "become a medium through which English-speaking and French-speaking people develop significant meaningful communication with each other."

Growing Government involvement in specialized aspects of education, social welfare and recreation will modify the need for many services formerly offered only by churches and voluntary organizations.

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"In some cases the voluntary agency will become obsolete. In other cases it will have to occupy an increasingly narrow and specialized area of activity. And in still other cases, it will have an opportunity of multiplying its effectiveness by becoming the instrument through which Government resources are directed and applied."

"Which of these results the YMCA will experience will depend upon the way in which we respond to the challenge implicit in the growth of Government involvement in areas in which we have traditionally been active. We must be prepared to take the initiative."

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